

Changes to early entry exams announced

– Kirsty Williams

An independent review by Qualifications Wales has found:

- The continued widespread use of early and multiple entry at GCSE poses risks to students and to the system, which are not easily justified.
- The practice encourages a “teaching the test” approach at the cost of wider subject knowledge.
- More than £3.3m was spent by schools on early entry in the last academic year.

Qualifications Wales concluded that they are “concerned about the extensive and growing use of early and multiple entry.”

In response the Education Secretary has announced that, from summer 2019, only a pupil’s first entry to a GCSE examination will count in their school’s performance measures. The current policy allows schools to count the best grade from multiple sittings.

Kirsty Williams said:

“The changes I am announcing today, based on Qualification Wales’ findings, will ensure that the interests of pupils are always put first.

“I am concerned that pupils who had the potential to get an A*, A or a B at the end of a two year course end up having to settle for a C. Too often this is because they take their exam early and are not re-entered again. I want every child to reach their full potential in school. Early entry must only be for the minority of pupils who will benefit.

“GCSEs are designed to be sat after two years of teaching, not one. These changes will ensure our young people access a broad and balanced curriculum, and focus in on what’s best for our children and young people.”